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Growth in Colorado Springs Drives Wellness Focus

The charming town of Colorado Springs, founded by Gen. William Jackson Palmer in 1871, has long been a popular destination. The beautiful scenery welcomed U.S. and international visitors, and the plentiful sunshine and dry climate drew those seeking health benefits. Colorado Springs has had its fair share of growth spurts, with the population more than tripling since 1970 according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Throughout Colorado Springs, architects are not only designing facilities to accommodate and support this continued growth but are setting new standards for wellness-focused design innovation that recalls the Springs' earliest days as a city focused on the health of its residents.

- **The Pikes Peak Summit Complex – pursuing the Living Building Challenge at 14,000 feet.** The Pikes Peak Summit Complex is a long-awaited replacement project for the 1960s Summit House atop Pikes Peak and is one of the highest-altitude projects of its kind ever constructed in the United States. The 34,000-square-foot structure will serve as a new visitor destination for the more than 600,000 people who reach the summit each year.

Sustainable design was a primary focus for the design team and project partners. This is a significant challenge given the project's altitude and extreme climate. The design is currently exceeding the goal of LEED Silver. More importantly, the design team is pursuing Living Building Challenge certification, which would make the new Summit Complex one of the most innovative and environmentally sensitive facilities in Colorado. The Living Building Chal-



The Wellness Garden at the newly-opened NICU at the St. Francis Medical Center provides a place of respite for families of premature infants. Courtesy RTA Architects and Fred Fuhrmeister; Time Frame Images

lenge connects the building's occupants to light, air, food, nature and community. "Living buildings" produce more energy than they use and reduce net water usage to zero.

- **The University of Colorado at Colorado Springs William J. Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center – a world-class destination.** One of four Colorado Springs City for Champions projects, the William J. Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center at UCCS will integrate academics, clinical services, research, performance training and patient education into a unique 104,000-square-foot building. The City for Champions initiative aims to spur economic growth, strengthen the local economy, create more than 5,100 new jobs, and increase tourism.

Partnering with Penrose-St. Francis Health Ser-



The Chinook Trail Middle School in Academy District 20 has been designed to the WELL Building Standard, which considers the occupants' whole-person health with regard to the quality of air, water, nourishment, light, fitness opportunities and comfort. Courtesy RTA Architects and MOA Architecture



The design team and project partners of the Pikes Peak Summit Complex are pursuing Living Building Challenge certification, which would make the new Summit Complex one of the most innovative and environmentally sensitive facilities in Colorado at an altitude of 14,000 feet. Courtesy RTA Architects and GWWO Inc./Architects

vices and Centura Health, the project broke ground Oct. 18 and will provide a forward-thinking multidisciplinary academic environment for both undergraduate and graduate students. Penrose-St. Francis will operate a variety of clinics to provide whole-person care. The Hybl Center will also be the home to three centers of distinction:

1. The Center for Tactical and Occupational Performance will provide a range of programs for military, police, fire, rescue and other first responders, along with other civilian occupations with similar physical demands.

2. The Center for Athletes and Active Individuals with Physical Disabilities will support testing and performance services that are adapted to the special needs of athletes including elite wounded warriors and para-athletes, and other athletes and active individuals with physical challenges.



The UCSB William J. Hybl Sports Medicine and Performance Center will integrate undergraduate and graduate academics and clinical services into a world-class sports medicine and performance training destination. Courtesy RTA Architects and HOK

3. The Center for Health and Performance in Extreme Environments will address the demands of elite athletes, military service members, and recreationalists face in environmental extremes.

• **St. Francis Medical Center Neonatal Intensive Care Unit – transforming NICU care.** The new NICU at St. Francis Medical Center is the first phase of construction for the four-story expansion to serve the growing population on the city's north side. The NICU opened in September, and the remainder of the expansion is scheduled for completion in early 2019.

After years of research and collaboration with Penrose-St. Francis, the design team crafted the NICU in the Family Integrated Care model, which encourages greater parent involvement in premature infant's care. Traditionally, infants are separated from their parents, but studies show that this often has a negative impact on the well-being of both the parents and the infants. With this new model, parents are encouraged to be essential members of the health care team.

In each private patient room, advanced room lighting supports and stimulates babies' circadian rhythms to promote growth and accelerate babies' release to go home. Increased space was designed to care for multiples (twins, triplets, etc.) in the same room, easing family visits. A NICU family lounge and wellness garden were created to provide respite and to allow families to connect with and support each other. A family pre-discharge room closely models the experience of home and provides a place for nursing staff to support parents preparing to transition out of the hospital.

• **Chinook Trail Middle School – designed to the WELL Building Standard.** In 2016, a \$230 million bond was passed in Academy School District 20, the largest district on the north side of Colorado Springs. Chinook Trail Middle School is the largest project in the bond, with the 125,000-square-foot campus being constructed to open for the 2019-2020 school year for 1,000 students.

Although not pursuing certification, Chinook Trail Middle School is being designed to the WELL Building Standard, which provides a model for design and construction

to holistically integrate health features throughout built environment. Unlike LEED, which focuses strictly on the sustainability of the building, the WELL Building Standard considers the occupants' health and well-being with regards to the quality of air, water, nourishment, light, fitness opportunities and comfort.

Colorado Springs is projected to perhaps become the most populous city in Colorado, surpassing Denver by 2050 according to the State Demography Office. As the Springs grows, it is also beginning to define itself as an innovative city focused on the well-being of its citizens. The future of Colorado Springs is promising, and its architects are designing innovative, wellness-focused buildings that support the city's growing reputation as a dynamic, beautiful, healthy place to live.\\

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